

# Pigs replaced cows on this farm

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Staff Correspondent

HAMBURG — Changing a dairy farm into a hog fattening operation may not appeal to every farmer but that's what Stanley Derstine did. When Derstine and his family decided three years

ago that they didn't have to milk cows to continue farming, hogs were not necessarily what they were planning on raising.

The hog fattening operation grew gradually from the time Derstine bought a group of feeder

pigs. Once he started raising the first group he began planning for more.

Feeling it was too expensive to build a new setup designed for raising hogs, Derstine remodeled his stanchion barn after looking at other operations and

getting ideas on how to change his existing facilities so they would accommodate his new interests. "I also feel," explained Derstine, "that old buildings converted to your needs seem to perform better than new buildings sometimes."

To accommodate the new operation, Derstine took out the stanchions and built pens along both sides of the barn, leaving an aisle down the center of the barn. The pens were constructed out of cinder blocks and average about 12 feet by 16 feet in size. The barn cleaner was left in and covered with slats to make cleaning easy. Sash blocks were used in the doorway of each pen and three-eighths inch plywood is slipped in for the doors.

When full, the barn can hold between 400 and 500 hogs at a time. The pens are scraped down daily, which this farmer feels is well worth the half hour it takes to do it. The gutters can hold the manure for a few days so hauling is only done a few times a week. But a manure pit is also in the plans for the near future.

The hogs are bought as feeders at about 40 pounds and fed until market weight. Derstine had been feeding all the hogs high moisture shelled corn but has found that feeding the smaller pigs a commercial pelleted feed



Farming with hogs, instead of dairy cows, is less demanding on Stanley Derstine's time. The Berks Countain made the switch about three years ago.

gives them a better start. "I have learned a lot so far," he remarked, "but still have a lot more to learn."

When the hogs reach about 70 pounds they are switched to the high moisture corn and are given a 16 per cent protein supplement at a four to one ratio until they weigh about 125 pounds. From there they are cut back on

supplement to a seven to one ratio until sold.

The corn is fed whole, which seems to work well. The hogs eat the whole corn before they clean up the "fines" explained Derstine and there doesn't seem to be any whole corn in the manure. They are fed twice a day and given only what they will clean up at a feeding.

Derstine docks the tails when the pigs first arrive if they were not docked before. He has found this beneficial in preventing tail biting which occurs whenever hogs are under a stress. The hogs are also wormed on a regular basis.

Derstine likes to market his hogs every week to produce a more regular flow of income. He has found that his fattening operation is less demanding than the dairy was as far as his time is concerned. "I can get away with feeding only once a day if it is necessary," he said.

The Winter weather has not caused him any problem with hauling his manure but he feels the pit he has planned will fit his operation even better. Derstine plans to use liquid manure to top-dress his alfalfa because of the good results he got when he did it with his dairy manure.

There are still a few problems he feels he has to work out on this enterprise, but he is optimistic that they will be solved. It has been taking too long to finish some of the hogs. Switching to the pellets for the young pigs seems to be part of that answer, since they are getting a better start.

"You have to be optimistic in farming or you won't be in it long," he said. "From what I've learned I will be that much further ahead in the future."

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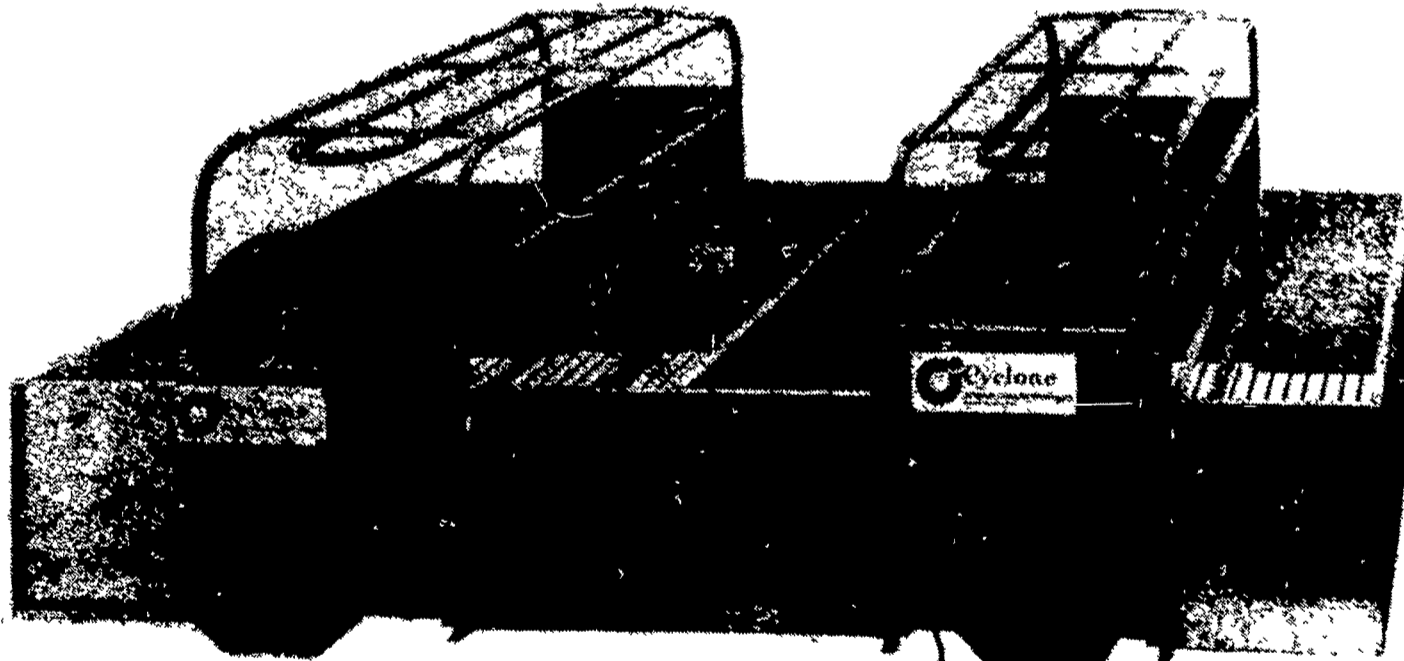
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